



Aruba Juniors celebrates 75 years of serving the community

The Aruba Juniors is one of the oldest sports organizations still operating on Aruba, offering healthy pastimes for mind and body to the island's youth and elderly. On Thursday, March 27, they celebrated the 75th anniversary with a festive evening at their sport hall in Oranjestad, in the company of not only their present members, but also some of the island's most noted athletes of the past.

The hundreds attending the event ranged in age from young children to retirees, many maintaining fitness and good health by belonging to either the basketball, softball or Little League Baseball teams of the Aruba Juniors. Aside from a ceremony attended by the Minister of Sports, Culture and Labor, Ramon Lee, the Minister of Finance, Nilo Swaen, and Director of the Aruba Sports Union Gerry Franca, an exposition honoring the achievements of the past was on display to commemorate the event. Walls were decked with memorabilia of the many years that Aruba Juniors has offered a focus and center for family activities, as were cabinets and shelves with the hundreds of championship trophies the teams have garnered over the years.

Presiding over the awards ceremony was noted educator Ramón Todd Dandaré along with Aruba Juniors President since 1999, Luis Tromp. The evening opened with the dedication of the newly renovated softball and baseball field to the late Luis Swaen, with his widow and son Nilo attending to accept the honor. The enclosed basketball court and clubhouse that was built in 2004 was dedicated to Juan "Capan" Tromp for his many contributions to the reputation and continuation of Aruba Juniors.

During the celebration, a number of individuals and organizations were honored for their support of Aruba Juniors and the cause of providing productive pastimes for the island's youth and encouraging physical fitness. These included Valero Refinery Aruba, Lotto pa Deporte and CEDE Aruba, who provided the funds for the renovation of the facility and the modernization of the sport complex and clubhouse. Also receiving a special trophy was Gerry Giel of Gerry's Refricenter for his continuing support of the softball teams.

A number of individuals that devote a great deal of time coaching the youth basketball teams also received recognition and plaques, including Tom Pietersz, who works with teenagers ages thirteen to eighteen, and Sandra Croes, who has coached the younger teams for eleven years.

President Luis Tromp with the assistance of Secretary Emile Herde took this opportunity to install five individuals as "Honorary Members" of Aruba Juniors for a lifetime of athletic accomplishment. Pedro "Shon Papa" de Windt, Luty Burleson, Henry Burleson, Eddy Becker and Juan "Capan" Tromp all received plaques of recognition and a place of honor in the exhibition hall along side other sports figures Gochi Brion, Luis Swaen, Victor Albus, Jeannete Agunber and Prisca Kock. Also receiving recognition that night were Diet Booij, former president of Aruba Juniors, Hubert Kock of Lotto pa Deporte, and Carmen Loefstop, for the time she has devoted to coaching the youth softball teams.

The award ceremony ended with the recognition of the efforts and accomplishments of the club and President Luis Tromp by a representative of the Santa Cruz Sport Club. It finished with the introduction and presentation to Ministers Lee and Swaen of a newly published book by Luis Tromp, which details the seventy-five year history of Aruba Juniors. The books were then offered for sale and were quickly snapped up as a souvenir of the evening.

Aruba has many sports "clubs" but few with the long history of Aruba Juniors, which today is more active than ever in encouraging fitness, team spirit and healthy competition, qualities that help to develop the youth, and keep the elderly vital and active. THE NEWS extends to Aruba Juniors acknowledgement and congratulations for their long service to the community and best wishes for continued success.